

7.

SUBSTANCE
OF THE
S P E E C H
OF
THE HONOURABLE
THOMAS ERSKINE,
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS,
ON
Monday, the 3d of February, 1800,
ON A
MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO THE THRONE,
APPROVING OF THE REFUSAL OF MINISTERS
TO TREAT WITH THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

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SUBSTANCE
OF THE
S P E E C H
OF THE HONOURABLE
THOMAS ERSKINE.

MR. ERSKINE said, that the House was assembled upon a most momentous occasion: they were assembled upon a new æra in the war; and without, for the moment, annexing any epithet to it, or adverting to its unparalleled calamities, it could not be denied that a NEW ÆRA, in any *possible war*, which led to a nearer prospect of peace, was a most critical and auspicious period. His Majesty's Ministers had undoubtedly considered the present proposition of the French Republic as by no means fit to be rejected, under the sanction of the *former* determinations of the House; because, if they had so considered

it, they would not have advised the King to ask their opinion: no responsibility could have been attached to Ministers for acting upon the *former* Councils of Parliament; more especially as the answer sent to the proposition from thence was strictly within the province of the Executive Government, in the exercise of which (*except in doubtful and momentous cases*), Ministers were not only not bound to ask a sanction for their proceedings, but it was not the practice of the Constitution to come to the Lords and Commons for advice, much less in a case where they had already delivered opinion after opinion for years together. There existed, therefore, on the confession of Ministers themselves, *a new era in the war*, on which Parliament was called to deliberate, and to originate an opinion.

The advice which the House was called upon to deliver to His Majesty had been by no means correctly stated by the right honourable Secretary, who had proposed the Address: the advice and opinion desired by His Majesty could only be found in his gracious message to the House, which had not only not been pursued in the statement of the right honourable Secretary, but had been as if it were studiously departed from. The question was *not*, whether the King should have yielded to an immediate armistice, nor, whether he should have at once opened a negotiation without consulting with his allies; much less on *what* terms, or subject to *what* qualifications a pacific proposition should have been taken into consideration, or finally adopted; but whether the House could possibly fulfil His Majesty's expectation, as expressed in his message, by signifying its approbation of the specific answer which had been sent. Whether the House of Commons could say, in the face of a suffering nation and

a desolated world, that a lofty, imperious, declamatory, insulting answer, to a proposition professing peace and conciliation, was the answer which ought to have been sent to France, or to any human Government. Whether this was really the question for the consideration of the House upon the King's message, was neither matter of argument nor opinion, but matter of fact:—recourse could only be had to the message itself, which he would read.

*“ His Majesty has thought proper, on this occasion, to direct
“ that there should be laid before the House, copies of communi-
“ cations recently received from the enemy, and of the answers
“ which have been returned thereto, by His Majesty's com-
“ mand.*

*“ His Majesty entertains the fullest confidence, that THOSE
“ ANSWERS will appear to this House to HAVE BEEN
“ CONFORMABLE TO THAT LINE OF CONDUCT WHICH
“ WAS REQUIRED FROM HIS MAJESTY ON THIS OCCA-
“ SION, by his regard to all the most important interests of his
“ dominions.”*

It was plain, therefore, that they were called upon *not* to advise His Majesty upon the fitness of an armistice, or of an immediate negotiation, but to ratify, or to condemn, the policy and fitness of the *specific answer* which Ministers, upon their *own* authority, had previously sent to France. No materials had been laid before the House to enable it to judge of the fitness of an *immediate* armistice, or even of an unqualified acceptance of an *immediate* negotiation; because the one and the other might depend upon our engagements with other countries, and the actual position of the war. But to judge of the *unfitness* of the answer, the answer itself fur-

nished a sufficient foundation ; because, nder *uno circum-*
stances, and at no time, could such an answer be either wise or
 decent, from the Ministers of any nation, to any possible pro-
 fession of conciliation and peace. Mr. Erskine said, that so
 far, therefore, from consenting to the Address which the
 Secretary of State had proposed to them, he was perfectly
 prepared to tell the King, that the answer, which he ex-
 pected to be approved of by the House, was such as no rea-
 sonable men ought to approve ; because it was rash, inso-
 lent, and provoking, without necessity. Whether Ministers
 ought at once to have acceded to the propositions made
 to them, or in what manner they ought to have qual-
 ified, or even evaded them, as wise policy might have dic-
 tated, His Majesty, as he had already observed, had not laid
 before the House materials for judging ; neither did he (Mr.
 Erskine) mean so far to assume the character of a statesman,
 as to give an opinion on such points, above all without facts
 to go upon : but though he might not be able, so circum-
 stanced, to determine what answer might have been right, he
 could, without the possibility of being mistaken, pronounce
 that the answer given was odiously and absurdly wrong. As
 a vindication of the war, it was loose, and, in some parts,
 unfounded ; but as an answer to a pacific proposition, it
 was dangerous as a precedent to the universal interests of
 mankind : it rejected the very idea of peace, as if peace
 were a curse, and the demand of negotiation an insult ; and
 held fast to war, as if war were an inseparable adjunct to the
 prosperity of nations. This was no figure ; because every end
 of wise policy (if wise policy had even imperiously dictated
 the continuance of war) might have been reconciled by a

milder answer. The King might have said, " That he
 " saw with satisfaction the pacific disposition of the new Go-
 " vernment of France, and would not question its sincerity,
 " but that the various aggressions and injuries of her past
 " Governments had involved the question of peace or war in
 " many complicated considerations: that His Majesty had
 " been obliged to combine with other nations for the secu-
 " rity of his dominions, and the peace and order of Europe;
 " that, so circumstanced, he could neither treat separately,
 " nor in conjunction with his allies, without consultation
 " and abundant consideration; but that His Majesty would
 " embrace the earliest occasion to return a more detailed an-
 " swer to the proposition of the French Republic."—Mr.
 Erskine did not at all mean to assert, that what he had hastily
 stated as a possible answer, would have been the proper one
 to have returned; nor was he prepared to say what would
 have been the fittest to adopt: his judgment was confined
 to a positive, unequivocal censure of the answer which had
 been sent, and of every other answer which, by bombast and
 petulant declamation, without any distinct meaning, seemed
 to have no other end or object than to remove peace to an
 incalculable distance. The answer appeared to him to have,
 most unadvisedly, put in issue the causes of the war, which
 the two nations could never, in the nature of things, be
 brought to agree upon, and which were wholly irrelevant to
 the question of a peace, which the groans and sufferings of
 the world so loudly and feelingly demanded. Whether
 England or France was the aggressor in the war could no
 longer be debated in that House with any possible effect,
 though posterity would sit in awful and impartial judgment
 on the question. It was a subject on which he had deli-

vered an opinion, and which he had seen no reason to depart from ; but he should have thought it the height of impertinence and folly to have come down to the House, expecting to produce any conviction on that subject, after the character and consistency of the House had been so long and so irretrievably pledged, both by its declarations and its conduct, for nine years together.

In bringing, therefore, before the House its different acts in the progress of the war, he did not call upon them to reverse their former judgments, by the censure which he called on them to pronounce on the answer to the proposals from France, but only to point out to them, that the same fatality of resisting peace, *not* upon specific injuries and complaints, but upon *general* and *undefined* objections to the state and condition and views of France, had characterized the war from the beginning ; had been, indeed, the cause of it ; and, if persisted in by the sanction of the measure in question, would lead to fruitless and endless hostility.

The French Revolution was undoubtedly in its beginning a great and awful event, which could not but extend its influence more or less to other nations. So mighty a fabric of despotism and superstition, after having endured for ages, could not fall to the ground without a concussion which the whole earth would feel ; but the evil of such a Revolution, if any there ever was to other nations, was only to be averted by cautious *internal* policy, and not by external war ; unless it became impossible, from actual and not *speculative* aggression, to maintain the relations of peace. The question was *not* whether the original or the present effects of the French Revolution were beneficial or dangerous, but what was our own policy and duty, as connected with their existence.

The American Revolution, when it first broke out, was inveighed against by its opponents in the same extravagant and useless declamations ; but a person who had long flourished in eloquence within these walls, had given the only fit answer to complaints of revolutions in other countries.

"The question," said Mr. Burke, in moving his conciliation with America, "is not whether this condition of human affairs deserves praise or blame ; but, *What, in God's name, are you to do with it ?*" Had Ministers yet been able by eight years invective in this House to mitigate the evils of the French Revolution ? On the contrary, after in a manner creating the worst of them, they had prevented them from subsiding, and provoked most of the excesses which now furnished the pretexts of perpetual and unavailing war.

When France cut off her most unfortunate Prince, and established her first Republic, she had an Ambassador at our Court : he was here, indeed, as the French King's Ambassador, but he presented letters of credence from the first Republic, with the most unqualified professions of respect and friendship. Mr. Erskine did not enter into their sincerity, because they were never tried : they were not only respectful in form, but the interest of France was an argument at least that they were not a fraud upon England. It had been said, that at that moment the aggressions of France were just causes of war : He had denied that formerly ; he now denied it again : though he insisted that it was foreign to the just consideration of the subject before the House. If France had been guilty of aggressions, why did not England complain of these aggressions, and dismiss the Ambassador on refusal of satisfaction ? Not a syllable of complaint was

ever uttered against France, capable of being adjusted by negotiation. On the contrary, when Louis XVI. before his death, most feelingly and earnestly beseeched our mediation with the continental powers that threatened the tranquillity of France, we positively refused our mediation; and, on his death, we dismissed the Ambassador accredited by the Republic, for no other avowed reason than that France had tried and executed her King. What was that to England as a cause of war? If France, at that time, was engaged in projects inconsistent with peace, WHY WERE THEY NOT STATED? If any *specific objections* exist to peace at THIS MOMENT, why are they not NOW stated, and made the subject of negotiation or war? But *then, as now*, war was provoked and peace rejected upon general and unjustifiable objections—upon speculative dangers to Religion and Government—which, supposing them to have existed with all their imaginary consequences, were more likely to be increased than diminished by the fury and bitterness of war. M. Chauvelin, with the olive branch in his hand, from the first Republic of France, was sent out of the country, on twenty-four hours notice, *not* for any thing France was charged to have done as a national aggression towards this country, or other powers of Europe, *but because France had beheaded her King.*

On the 24th of January 1792, the King, by his Secretary of State, had most unfortunately been advised to declare to M. Chauvelin, that, after such an event (referring to the execution of the King at Paris), “*His Majesty could not permit his residence any longer in England:*” And, in the communication of this dismissal to the two Houses of Parliament, in a few days afterwards, it was *in terms* expressed to be “ON ACCOUNT OF THE LATE ATROCIOUS ACT

PERPETRATED AT PARIS." The question, therefore, was *not* whether France had at that time been guilty of aggressions which *might* have justified war, but whether these aggressions had been complained of or acted upon, as the causes of hostilities which negotiation might have adjusted ; and whether, on the contrary, a pretext for war had not been furnished to France by dismissal of her Ambassador, for a cause which it was impossible to reconcile either with prudence or the law of nations. At that time Ministers were repeatedly implored, from this side of the House, not to invite war upon principles which made peace dependent, in a great measure, upon systems and forms of Government, and not upon the conduct of nations ; upon theories, which could not be changed, instead of aggressions, which might be adjusted or corrected. At this period, and for a long time afterwards, France had a strong interest in peace : she had not extended her conquests, and her internal security was doubtful : unfortunately we suffered these auspicious periods to pass away, and instead of negotiating a peace, with confederated and unexhausted nations in our train, by a distinct detail of the aggressions we had to complain of, and of the securities which they entitled us to demand for England and for Europe ; Ministers, for two years together (*though repeatedly warned of the impending consequences*), declared France to be incapable of the relations of amity, and left her to feel and to act towards other nations, as other nations professed to feel and to act towards her. Europe had combined to extinguish France, and to place her without the pale of social community : France in her turn acted towards Europe on the same principles ; had desolated and ravaged whatever territories she occupied, and spread her conquests every

where with the unexampled rapidity we have witnessed. What other consequences had Ministers to expect? Was it imagined that a powerful nation, so surrounded, would act merely on the defensive, or, that in the midst of a Revolution, which the confederacy of nations had rendered terrible, the rights of nations would be respected? No; we gave the different French Governments, by our conduct, a pretext for jealousy of every other European State, and, in a manner, goaded her on to the accomplishment of all the conquests which had since been the subject of just lamentation and complaint; the confederacy of nations which Great Britain kept up against her, obliged her to maintain mighty armies in her defence: but such a war could not be long defensive. Defence was often only practicable by the boldness of invasion; and the armies of France, which other nations had, in a manner, created, were turned loose to feed upon them. Ambitious projects, not, perhaps, originally contemplated, followed their steps, and the world was changed with portentous violence, because the Ministers of Great Britain had resolved that, if it changed at all, it should revert to establishments which had reached their period and expired.

Mr. Erskine then said, that what he wished principally to impress upon the House, as connected with their present deliberations, and as a caution not to let slip the present auspicious period, was, that when Ministers at various periods during the war, had been pressed not to repel peace by general objections to the capacity of France to maintain the relations of amity, they had, by persisting in that irrational system, produced the very evils which the war was entered upon to avert. Our enemies uniformly increased in strength,

keeping pace on their side with the hostile mind on ours, and which every day became more severe and unrelenting. In this manner we conducted ourselves till Holland was overrun ; the Netherlands annexed to the Republic ; our principal allies detached from the confederacy ; some of them connected in alliance with the enemy ; and, what was worse than all, schemes of extension and aggrandizement avowed and acted upon, which not only had not existed before the war, but which the war had absolutely created ; since, even after the first provocation, by the dismissal of Chauvelin, and even after repeated refusals to consider France as a civilized nation, she did not set up her pretensions of boundary, nor begin her career of conquest, until confederated Europe had furnished her with the pretext, at least, of concealing her ambition under the cover of maintaining her Government and securing its tranquillity and independence. Mr. Erskine said, that the accumulated evils of procrastination on such a subject, and upon such principles, were not truths to be maintained by arguments or proofs, but had been confessed by Ministers themselves by something more than words—by *their own conduct* : for, no sooner had the French Republic been re-organized in 1795, on the ruins of Robespierre's tyranny, and that Constitution established which had been lately overthrown, than Ministers, *of their own accord*, without any pacific proposition from France, such as they had received at this moment, advised His Majesty to inform Parliament, “ *that the crisis depending at the beginning of that Session, had led to such a state of things as enabled His Majesty to MEET any disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy, on just and reasonable terms.*” How His Majesty was to meet any such disposition from a nation

which lay under a parliamentary ban of incapacity from England, never reversed by any declaration to that country, and which France could never consider as reversed by the King of Great Britain's declaration to his own Parliament without communication to her, it was not easy to conceive. That consideration was then pressed on Ministers to urge them to take an *active* step in the important work of peace ; but whether they were right or wrong in not going farther, was not the question of to night. He desired to ask the House, how it was possible, consistently with this declaration of His Majesty, in 1795, which had received the sanction of the House, for Ministers to send such an insulting answer to the present proposition of peace, and to ask our approbation of it ? In 1795, without any pacific proposition from France, His Majesty had professed himself open to receive one : at that period the new Government of France was not above a month old ; a Government not creating itself, like the present, over a people tired of theories, and wearied with the inevitable consequences of popular convulsions, but established at a time when the spirit of Democracy, which had been made the very pretext of all our own alarms, and of the incapacity of France, as a social Government, was yet at its very height. At that time, too, the alarm in England, from the probable contagion of French principles, by the intercourse of peace, was not only the favourite theme of Ministers, but was made the foundation of a system, by which some of our most essential liberties were abridged or suspended. The nation was stated to be full of plots, and Ireland was known to be on the brink of destruction : yet, at *that moment*, when, to add to the statement, near two hundred millions, since wrung from the people, remained un-

exhausted for the resources of war, Ministers invited the infant, *Democratic, Jacobin, Regicide*, Republic of France to propose a peace. On what possible principle then could the same House of Commons which sanctioned *that* proceeding, when *no* peace was offered, when *no* pacific spirit had even in profession been manifested, when France was in the very meridian of her Democracy, and in the full career of her desolating conquests, on what possible principle could the same House of Commons approve of the answer which, in the present state of things, had been sent? The danger from France was now greatly diminished, because the resistless fury of that popular spirit, which had been the uniform topic of declamation, had not only subsided, from time and expansion, but was curbed, or rather extinguished, by the forms of the new Government, which invited us to peace. If sincerity in a foreign Government was a thing which could ever be correctly estimated or acted on, as a basis for listening to, or rejecting peace, there was more reason now than formerly for considering that Bonaparte was sincere. Surrounded with perils; at the head of an untried Government—menaced by a great confederacy, of which England was the grand prop and director—compelled to press heavily upon the resources of an exhausted people, whose power of renovating riches and prosperity were suspended by war—it was his interest undoubtedly to be at peace with England: But though it was thus his interest to negotiate, it might be no less the interest of this country to accept of it.

If Bonaparte found that his interest was served by an arrangement with England, the same interest would lead him to continue it. Looking to himself, and to his own power, he would make national sacrifices to preserve tran-

quillity, and England would thus acquire an additional influence in the scale of Europe ; because no man in his senses, in the circumstances of Bonaparte, at this moment, having once reconciled, by wise policy, so mighty a power as Great Britain, would run the risk of oversetting his own authority, by throwing her back again into the war, without the utmost and most unlooked-for provocations. The whole argument, therefore, was reduced to this ; that because France was disposed to peace, we ought not. But no maxim could be more false, than that the policy of a nation was to be collected by resisting whatever the policy of an antagonist power had suggested : it was not true in the arrangements of commerce, or in the progress of riches and improvement ; nor, indeed, in any thing else. The interests of nations were, for the most part, reciprocal ; and the interest of peace, to all nations, was an interest perpetual and universal. If Democracy was the evil, and the contagion of it a well-founded apprehension, surely that apprehension was better founded in 1795 than at present : the popular societies, which at the former period had occasioned so much alarm, could not now re-organize themselves after the pattern of the French Assemblies ; nor could the English multitude be misled by the view of a dominion exercised in France by the visible authority of the people. Our own country was also in a different situation ; since, without admitting it to have been, in 1795, in the state which Ministers then represented it—still it was different. So mighty an event as the French Revolution, could not but affect and agitate the human mind on the subject of Government every where ; and that agitation undoubtedly produced a strong attention to the abuses of our own : but

no man could assert, that any such spirit, whether it was good or evil, existed at this moment ; and the supposed existence of it formerly, had enabled Government to arm the whole nation, and to place it in the most absolute state of internal security. The sword was in the hand of the higher and middle orders of the people ; and the domestic dangers which had been always held up as an argument against peace, were, in our present condition, wholly and permanently removed. Mr. Erskine farther said, that this disposition, or rather conduct of Ministers, in 1795, was not single or transitory : they continued from that period up to their present refusal to negotiate, to act upon the same principle : they continued to declare themselves ready to negotiate, and a year afterwards, viz. in November, 1796, actually sent Lord Malmesbury to Paris to propose a peace. At this period, not a syllable was insinuated of the danger of a peace with France, or of incapacity in her rulers, to maintain its relations. No difficulties were then opposed by Ministers on the pretexts which had existed formerly, and which have been revived to-day : on the contrary, the negotiation went off upon a point of difference in regard to terms ; it broke off upon our insisting on the restoration of Belgium as the *sine qua non*. He had before him Lord Malmesbury's letter to Lord Grenville, which would bring it to the memory of the House :

“ You then persist, said M. Delacroix, in applying this
 “ principle to Belgium ? I answered, most certainly : and I
 “ should not deal fairly with you if I hesitated to declare in the
 “ outset of the negotiation, THAT ON THIS POINT YOU
 “ MUST ENTERTAIN NO EXPECTATION THAT HIS

“ MAJESTY WILL RELAX, OR EVER CONSENT TO SEE
 “ BE GIUM A PART OF FRANCE.”

And afterwards he says : “ *M. Delacroix again asked me,*
 “ *whether in his report he was to state the disuniting Belgium*
 “ *as a sine qua non, from which His Majesty would not de-*
 “ *part ; I replied, IT MOST CERTAINLY WAS A SINE*
 “ *QUA NON, FROM WHICH HIS MAJESTY WOULD NOT*
 “ *DEPART.*”

And again, in the very next paragraph : “ *M. Delacroix*
 “ *repeated his concern at the peremptory way in which I*
 “ *made this assertion ; and asked, whether it would admit of*
 “ *no modification ? I replied, if France could, in a contre*
 “ *projet, point out a practicable and adequate one, STILL*
 “ *KEEPING IN VIEW, THAT THE NETHERLANDS MUST*
 “ *NOT BE FRENCH, OR LIKELY AGAIN TO FALL INTO*
 “ *THE HANDS OF FRANCE, such a proposal might cer-*
 “ *tainly be taken into consideration.*”

Here, then, was a negotiation entered upon without objection or reserve ; and broken off, not upon *general* incapacities to preserve the relations of amity, but upon *specific* differences. The termination of this negotiation read an awful lesson to the House. At that moment France had not a soldier nor a foot of land in Italy, and a hundred and fifty millions of British property existed, which had since been spent upon war. Supposing all other points were capable of being adjusted, should we *now* insist on Belgium ? Good God ! had not Ministers themselves reminded us this very night, that in a few months afterwards, on the second mission of Lord Malmesbury, their *sine qua non* of the restoration of Belgium had been retracted, and that France broke off the negotiation upon other pretences ?—She did so

undoubtedly ; but that was another awful warning against procrastination. Her position was changed ; her spirit was altered ; her ambition was inflamed ; her views were extended ; she was fired with the prospect of dominion and conquest ; and the consequences were but too visible in the desolation of the earth which had ensued. When nations are provoked, security is not long the measure of their activity ; and when they cannot exist without mighty armies, they must feed and employ them beyond their own frontiers, in the territories of other nations. He never meant to vindicate the conduct of France in the termination of the second negotiation : she shewed, undoubtedly, no disposition to peace ; and that aversion, on her part, gave great strength to Ministers, from the necessity of exertion on the part of this country ; but for the argument of to-night, nothing could be more fatal to Ministers than that admission ; because, for the very same reason, and upon the same unalterable principles, *our* aversion to peace at this moment would consolidate and increase the power of the present rulers of France.

But Ministers seemed to be so aware, that the inconsistency of their conduct, in being for years negotiating, and now suddenly refusing to negotiate, would be insisted upon to-night from this side of the House, that the Secretary of State had himself anticipated the objection, and endeavoured to obviate it (a thing not even attempted in another place). They were impelled, it seems, to negotiate from the general wishes of the people ; and they yielded to them, though they saw considerable danger in the success : this was more than he expected.—Though it did not amount to a confession of insincerity, it amounted, in his mind, to a justification of it,

if it had existed ; because he could well conceive conjunctures, in which, when the current of temporary opinion ran strongly against a system which Ministers had, from principle and opinion, adopted, they might rather *seem* to give way to the public disposition than *really* to act upon it with energy, and in earnest, against the dictates of their own judgments, and the prosecution of their own systems. This course, however, could not be pursued without great management : and the sincerity of Statesmen, therefore, in the government of kingdoms, or in their transactions with foreign nations, could not be candidly assimilated to the truth and sincerity of private men. He could not, therefore, believe that Ministers put forth all their strength and zeal to forward negotiations, from the very success of which they apprehended so much danger : nevertheless, when their insincerity, at the former periods of the war, was urged against them, in argument, no argument had ever been repelled by them with more apparent indignation ; yet now, when they could no longer support even the colour of consistency, in rejecting the present proposition of peace, which they had before themselves incited, they changed their ground entirely, and almost admitted that their former negotiations had been forced on them, and that their failures had been rather an advantage than a misfortune.

Mr. Erskine then said, that having established, from the past conduct of Ministers, they were bound, upon their own principles, to negotiate at this moment, he would conclude the little he had to say, by shewing the manifest interest we had in listening to offers of peace. The present Government of France must either continue and establish its authority by wise policy and fortunate events, or it must perish in the storm of another Revolution : that surely was a self-

evident proposition. It was no less a one, that the Government which overturned it must either be a Democratical Revolution of the French people from *within*, or the return of the House of Bourbon, placed upon their antient Throne, by the triumphant arms of the confederacy. If Bonaparte's Government became established and confirmed in its authority, it was admitted, after some undefined period of probation, we were in the end to consent to peace; but was it certain that France would then be as willing as at present to be at peace with us? Fatal experience had taught us the contrary; for, after every interval when peace had been repelled by us, we had seen France in a more formidable aspect, and with a more alienated spirit. If, on the other hand, the Government of Bonaparte gave way to an *internal Democratic Revolution*, additional difficulties presented themselves: Ministers, upon their own principles, must put that new Government upon a similar state of probation, and so *in infinitum* any other establishment which might succeed in a revolutionary system. But what internal revolution might be expected to destroy Bonaparte's Government from within, if ever it should be destroyed? From whence could its destruction possibly come but from the revulsion of Democracy, over-awed by armies, and chained down by the complicated forms of the present complex Government? In the event of such a Revolution, all our panicks would return upon us: the terror of French principles would again become predominant, and war would be persisted in, though ruinous and hopeless, to prevent the more dangerous contagion of opinions to be engendered by a peace. But was it Bonaparte we objected to? Was it the MAN and not the GOVERNMENT we mistrusted? Were we to make war then

till his place was taken by some new Consul, though the present Government might remain? He did not mean to enter into any discussion of the character of this extraordinary person; but he would ask, whether the history of the world, much less the present state of France, moral or civil, furnished a reasonable expectation, that either accidents or new convulsions would raise up to power some character whose moderation and justice might be more safely reposed in? From the womb of Revolution and War, there had arisen in the world but one man of that description: there was but one WASHINGTON; alas! rather there only had been one—for, after having emancipated his country by his military skill, and founded her empire by his civil wisdom, it had pleased God to remove him from the world only a few months before the Government he might be said to have created, was fixing its seat in a city he had founded, and which was to carry his name, and the memory of genuine glory, to endless generations. No other alternative then remained but the restoration of the Bourbon House. He would not enter into what good could be expected for England from such an event: He would, in the teeth of all history and experience, suppose it to be auspicious, and confine himself to its practicability. He might assume the utter impossibility of such a change, except by the success of the confederacy: it must be, and only be, by entering France at the head of hostile armies, and placing Louis XVIII. on the Throne: but not *placing* him only; he must be *beld upon it* by the pressure of the power which fixed him there; and held upon it *against* the most obvious interests of the people of France, at least of that part of the people which have the

most decided influence in all countries—the people with whom property resided.

The whole property of France, real and personal, in the hands of its present possessors, depended upon the existence of the present, or some similar Government. It was impossible to restore the Princes of the Bourbon House without restitution to those who had been exiled in its defence, which, in effect, raised up the whole property in the nation to support the Republic, whatever they might feel concerning its defects. The same principle supported the British Government far more than her Constitution, however estimable, and gave new strength to Ministers in proportion as they ceased to deserve it. The destruction which a revolution in this country would bring upon public credit, and the ruin and downfall which would attend all the forms and tenures on which every kind of property depended for its security, formed an unsurmountable bulwark here at home: the three per cents. was the great fountain of loyalty and support to the establishments of Great Britain: every man who was invited to mix in revolutionary projects, above all as he advanced in life, and was fettered by its duties and obligations, considered these obstacles: he looked to his family, which he could still protect; to his friends, to whom he could, in spite of our burthens, administer consolation; and to his mortgages and lands, which furnished him with the only means to perform the duties, or to enjoy the delights of his existence. He felt so strongly the operation of these, that even if he could very distinctly anticipate the future advantages of a Revolution, yet if it certainly were to bring on for the present the calamities he had adverted to, he should feel disposed to cast the sacrifice upon the rising

generation, who might, after bearing the burthens, endure till the advantages came round to them. These feelings were not peculiar to this nation, but to every nation similarly circumstanced. It appeared to him, therefore, impossible that the Bourbon House could ever re-establish its authority without convulsion after convulsion, and war after war, which, if Great Britain were embarked in the duty or necessity of mixing in and maintaining, would ultimately destroy her resources, cramp all her pursuits, which had created her greatness, and, perhaps, pull down the very Constitution which we sought to support by means so repugnant to all the ends of wise and prudent Government.

But without resorting to the eventual or probable effects, one consequence of it appeared to be certain. Our insulting answer would confirm the very Government which we sought to destroy: it would produce unanimity at the very moment when nothing but division could support our cause. Upon the universal principles of human interest and feeling, it would raise up all France as a man against us: it would dissipate all lesser differences in the cause of common safety. The only way of judging of the effect of our answer, as a grand manifesto to unite all France, was to reverse the case, and to suppose that *we* had sent to France the pacific propositions, and that she had rejected it in the insulting language of *our* answer; that *we* had replied, putting aside the offence, and still inviting peace, and that *France* had finally referred to her first insulting refusal as her final determination. What would have been the consequence here? From what he felt in his own breast, he could rely upon the universal feelings of the country. He would have said to the right honourable gentleman, " However we

have differed on the causes or conduct of the war, it is now my duty and my interest to support you in the prosecution of it. It is no longer matter of choice, but of necessity : I am not only bound in interest, but feel every sentiment of enthusiasm connected with the security and glory of my country." In the same manner, Frenchmen, of all descriptions, would reason on the present occasion, and that natural sentiment, when supported by the influence and power of their Government, would be irresistible : our answer would discomfit their rebellion, and recruit their armies. Bonaparte would have too good reason to forgive all the intemperate declamations against his character and dominion, when they furnished him with the surest means of advancing and confirming them. In every view, therefore, of the question, he was decidedly against expressing any approbation of the answer which had been sent. It appeared to him to be pregnant with danger, and entailed an awful responsibility upon those who had advised it, and upon those who supported it.

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